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From the NIFA Communications Office

NIFA in the News – Week of April 1, 2013

Curious as to what happens to all the news releases you see in the NIFA newsroom? Here's the weekly summary of NIFA's mentions in the news media for the week of April 1, 2013.

In the News

Horse manure gains interest on Morrisville State College campus (Madison County Courier 3/27). Horse manure is gaining attention on the Morrisville State College campus—and it's not for its common use as a fertilizer. Ben Ballard, assistant professor of renewable energy and director of the college's Renewable Energy Training Center (RETC), along with students in the college's renewable energy programs, are studying the viability of converting the tons of stable waste produced at the college's equine facilities weekly into an alternative energy source. The study is part of a multi-million dollar grant, Distributed On-Farm Bioenergy, Biofuels & Biochemicals (FarmBio3), awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Link

ASA Details Impacts of CR (KTIC 3/29). President Barack Obama signed the Continuing Resolution into law Wednesday. The American Soybean Association has examined the ramifications of that measure for soybean farmers. ASA points out that funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - a priority for the group - was increased. The program is now funded at 274.8-million dollars - 10-million more than in fiscal year 2012. However - as a discretionary program - the initiative will be subject to USDA's 2.5-percent reduction within the next six months. ASA notes appropriations for research at land-grant universities - which fund ARS and extension activities - all suffered a cut of 7.61-percent from last year's funding levels. Link

UF's flow of research dollars may slow to trickle (Gainesville Sun 3/30). For a decade, the University of Florida has seen an unprecedented gusher of research dollars flowing its way, cultivating new inventions and innovations that contributed to a growth spurt in Gainesville's economy. But because of federal sequestration, the automatic spending cuts triggered by the austerity-minded Budget Control Act of 2011, that gusher could become a trickle if members of Congress don't resolve their differences over spending and taxing priorities. Federal research money accounts for more than a third of the IFAS budget, Payne said. IFAS is looking at losing $3.25 million from the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and an additional $8 million from the Hatch and Smith Lever Acts. Link

Morrisville State College harnessing horse manure as new power source (Oneida Daily Dispatch 3/31). Horse manure is gaining attention on the Morrisville State

College campus -- the stable waste is instead being considered as a source of energy. The study is part of a multi-million dollar grant awarded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Thirteen institutions are working on the project, which is being led by the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Eastern Regional Research Center in Wyndmoor, PA. Link

Soils in newly forested areas store substantial carbon that could help offset climate change (EurekAlert 4/1). If you're a land manager trying to assess the potential of forests to offset carbon emissions and climate change by soaking up atmospheric carbon and storing it, what's going on beneath the surface is critical. But while scientists can precisely measure and predict the amount of above-ground carbon accumulating in a forest, the details of soil-carbon accounting have been a bit fuzzy. Two University of Michigan researchers and their colleagues helped to plug that knowledge gap by analyzing changes in soil carbon that occurred when trees became established on different types of nonforested soils across the United States. In a paper published online April 1 in the Soil Science Society of America Journal, they looked at lands previously used for surface mining and other industrial processes, former agricultural lands and native grasslands where forests have encroached. The work was supported by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Link

New forests trap carbon underfoot (Futurity 4/1). Growing trees on formerly non-forested land can accumulate soil carbon that helps offset carbon emissions and climate change, say researchers. In a paper published online today in the Soil Science Society of America Journal, they looked at lands previously used for surface mining and other industrial processes, former agricultural lands, and native grasslands where forests have encroached. University of Michigan ecologist Luke Nave and his colleagues found that, in general, growing trees on formerly nonforested land increases soil carbon. Previous studies have been equivocal about the effects of so-called afforestation on soil carbon levels. Link

Director of USDA to speak (The Daily O'Collegian 4/1). Hiram Larew, the director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Center for International Programs, is speaking at 7:30 p.m. today in the Student Union. The topic of his speech in the Little Theater will be "Global Engagement: Learning as We Go." Larew's work has involved working extensively with higher education. He was involved in the Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization, a project that focused on revitalizing Iraqi agriculture by expanding education. The project was implemented by providing Iraqi universities and the Ministry of Agriculture with extension management, production, and marketing training. It was jointly offered by USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service and the Foreign Agricultural Service with funding from the U.S. Department of State. Link

To sprout lettuce year-round, 'mute' gene (Futurity 4/2). The discovery of a lettuce gene and related enzyme that put the brakes on germination during hot weather could lead to lettuce that can sprout all year, even at high temperatures. Researchers

from Arcadia Biosciences and Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University in India contributed to the study, which was funded by the US Department of Agriculture, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the National Science Foundation. Link

Beef cattle researchers explore nutritional strategies to time puberty in replacement heifers (The Vindicator 4/2). Cattle producers typically wean replacement heifers at seven months of age and raise them with limited nutritional input before their first breeding. This managerial strategy is often associated with delayed puberty, particularly in tropically-adapted Bos indicus-influenced cattle, according to researchers. To maximize successful pregnancies in replacement heifers early in their first breeding season, studies conducted at Texas A&M University and at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Station-Beeville are evaluating nutritional strategies to promote puberty consistently by 12-14 months of age in Bos taurus x Bos indicus crossbred heifers. Funding for the research has been provided by the Texas Beef Enhancement Program through AgriLife Research and by the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture-National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Link

OSU Receives $4.7 Million USDA Grant to Help Oregon Teens Stay Healthy (The Lund Report 4/2). Oregon State University has received a grant of nearly $5 million to develop an obesity prevention and healthy lifestyle program for teenagers. Unlike many programs that focus on treatment of children already at risk of obesity, this new program will aim at active high school-age teens involved in 4-H soccer programs in Oregon. OSU project directors Siew Sun Wong, an assistant professor of nutrition and a specialist with the Extension Service, and Melinda Manore, a professor of nutrition, were awarded $4.7 million to start the program, called "The WAVE Ripples for Change: Obesity Prevention for Active Youth in Afterschool Programs Using Virtual and Real-World Experiential Learning." It was awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Link

Disease-resistant tomatoes fight lethal pests (Cornell Chronicle 4/2). In the battle against thrips, Cornell breeder Martha Mutschler-Chu has developed a new weapon: a tomato that packs a powerful one-two punch to deter the pests and counter the killer viruses they transmit. The "dual resistant" insect and virus varieties may reduce or even eliminate the need for pesticides in several regions. The Cornell thrips-resistant tomato lines, with and without the virus resistance genes, will be used by Mutschler-Chu and an interdisciplinary team of eight other scientists from seven other institutions nationwide as part of a new five-year, $3.75 million project to control thrips and TOSPO viruses in tomatoes. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and is led by entomologist Diane Ullman of the University of California, Davis, and plant pathologist John Sherwood of the University of Georgia. Link

OSU avatars to smack down teen obesity (Portland Business Journal 4/2). Oregon State University will combine soccer, real-world experiences and virtual-world scenarios to help prevent teenage and adult obesity. The soon-to-launch program is

being funded by $4.7 million from the Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and aims to fend off obesity by encouraging kids to develop healthy eating patterns. Link

Oregon State University gets $4.7 million to study ways to keep young people healthy, fit (The Oregonian 4/2). Thanks to a $4.7 million federal grant, Oregon State University researchers are about to delve into a trouble spot in the battle against obesity: the transition years when teens grow into young adults and often pack on the pounds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture awarded the grant for an OSU-designed intervention program that will test which of three life-skills tracks work best to keep young people healthy as they move past high school. Link

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